

The Routledge companion to seventeenth century philosophy, edited by Dan Kaufman

There is a clear challenge for any volume that surveys an entire historical period: *brevity*. When this period is the seventeenth century, one of the richest philosophical, scientific, and religious centuries Western civilization has ever seen, the challenge becomes greater. When the stated intention of the volume is to survey not only the central thinkers and themes of this period, but also those that have been marginalized and forgotten, the challenge becomes greater still. Dan Kaufman's *The Routledge Companion to Seventeenth Century Philosophy* is an exemplary model of how to meet this challenge, and of how to achieve brevity without sacrificing scholarly rigour. Extensive in the diversity of its content, and with chapters from leading specialists, this volume will provide an excellent introductory resource for any student of early modern philosophy.

The volume does, however, have one significant drawback, which I want to draw attention to before commenting on select chapters. While Steven Nadler's lucid foreword highlights the steps taken in diversifying the canon of the history of early modern philosophy, the contributors to this volume fail to meet the criteria of diversity and inclusivity for which he argues. Of the twenty-one contributors to *The Routledge Companion to Seventeenth Century Philosophy*, only four are women. Nadler claims that '[...] the best work by historians of early modern philosophy is much more inclusive, in many different ways, and for that reason more sophisticated and interesting' (xv), but if sophistication is synonymous with an inclusive approach to the figures and topics of the history of philosophy, then it follows that volumes comprised of such inclusive content can only become more sophisticated and interesting as they in turn become more inclusive. It is to be hoped that future volumes make better attempts at inclusivity and diversity not just regarding the intellectual themes and figures they include, but also in the contributors that make up their volume.

That said, this extensive and detailed volume is an excellent addition to the literature on early modern philosophy. The volume is split into seven parts each addressing a central area of early modern philosophy. These parts are themselves divided into individual chapters concerning an aspect of the wider topic in question. So, for instance, in Part Two on 'Metaphysics,' Tad M. Schmaltz provides an excellent chronology of the evolution of the notion of substance in early modern philosophy. Providing more than a description of the varying ideas of substance we find in Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz, Schmaltz argues that we can discern a common thread that ties them all together. Such a thread, while modified slightly via the late scholasticism of Francisco Suárez, is to be found in the competing ideas of substance in Aristotle's *Categories* and *Metaphysics* (35-36). 'More than describing the differences between the various approaches

to substance metaphysics in the seventeenth century, Schmaltz demonstrates what they have in common, namely the dual conception of substance we find in Aristotle.'

After the first main section on the metaphysics of the period, the volume examines the dominant themes of its epistemology, eventually reaching a section on mind, language, and the less well trodden area of *the passions*. From the abstract metaphysical discussions of topics such as substance and qualities, Deborah Brown's chapter 'Power and Passion in Hobbes, Descartes and Spinoza' sets out to explain the role that the passions played in the new mechanical philosophies of the seventeenth century. Beginning from the claim that a theory of the passions was required to demonstrate that mechanistic understandings of things could provide a complete account of nature (334), Brown shows what role the passions played in the philosophies of Hobbes, Descartes, and Spinoza. But as well as this, Brown offers an informative survey of pre-modern theories of the passions, in the dominant Thomistic and Galenic traditions. Moreover, Brown usefully shows how Stoic and Augustinian influence played a role in the early modern philosopher's thinking about passions such as joy, courage, or anger.

Brown treats Descartes' and Hobbes' theory of the passions together across two interwoven sections. In the admirably lucid section on Spinoza, Brown shows that his theory of the affects cannot be understood in abstraction from his complex metaphysical system. Brown skilfully moves through the central parts of Spinoza's system, grounding the reader in the fundamentals of Spinoza's ontology and theory of mind before offering a reading of Spinoza's theory of the affects as it relates to the preceding theories of Descartes and Hobbes. However, Brown renders *affectus* as 'emotion,' which is not uncontroversial since, in contrast to 'affect,' it tends to anthropomorphize Spinoza's thinking, fixing in socio-linguistic convention what is only ever an increase or decrease in an individual's power to strive (be that individual human or otherwise). Still, Brown's chapter ends with an interesting discussion of how the mechanistic understanding of passion and power in Hobbes, Descartes, and Spinoza, leads naturally to a theory of political power in each of their respective philosophies.

The volume continues with detailed chapters on natural philosophy and theories of matter, as well as with a section addressing both the moral and political philosophies of the time. In the latter, Susanne Sreedhar's chapter offers a succinct overview of not only the socio-historical background to seventeenth century political philosophy, but also a detailed reading of the birth and rise of modern social contract theory. Whilst one chapter alone on political philosophy cannot do justice to all of the seventeenth-century developments in this area, Sreedhar's contribution serves to outline its most central themes.

The final chapter in the section on Philosophical Theology is Hickson and Lennon's *The Rise of Religious Skepticism*, which provides an overview of the rise of seventeenth-century skepticism about the foundations of theology. Examining the most well-known early modern philosophers, Hickson and Lennon weave a story of interconnected philosophies challenging the very foundations of theology and contributing to the rise of atheism in modernity. Beginning with Descartes, the authors wonder whether his attempted rational proof of God in the

Meditations did not actually have the opposite effect to what it originally intended. What if, like many of Descartes' contemporaries thought at the time, his proof fails? The rise of attempts to ground belief in reason was attended, Hickson and Lennon argue, by an increase in religious skepticism, for these proofs gambled the very existence of God on a rational proof that, unlike faith, was open to refutation by counter-argument. Subsequently, Hickson and Lennon examine the interconnected philosophies of Hobbes, Spinoza, Leibniz, and Bayle, assessing how their respective philosophies can be accused of spreading atheism under the auspices of their various philosophical systems. This chapter is not only an excellent, if brief, introduction to the link between Hobbes' materialism and atheism, or Spinoza's pantheism and atheism, for it also considers a variety of prominent philosophical *themes* that likewise posed a threat to theological orthodoxy. Readers will here find a concise and useful explanation of the critical method of biblical exegesis of Hobbes, La Peyrère, and Spinoza. These three thinkers are undoubtedly connected in their biblical hermeneutics, and Hickson and Lennon's chapter provides the reader with the basic building blocks for understanding the new critical-historical approach to reading the bible.

This volume will provide a very useful tool for both scholars and students of early modern philosophy. It is well presented, with sections that cover not only the basics regarding the central philosophical themes of the seventeenth century, but also some of the more important debates in the secondary literature. Likewise, the reader will find both its 'Index of Names' and 'Index of Subjects' an extremely helpful research tool.